

## Message Text

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ORIGIN INR-10

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E.O. 11652: XGDS-2

TAGS: EG, IS, PINR

SUBJECT: INTSUM 521 - MARCH 15, 1978

LONDON FOR KINSOLVING  
PARIS FOR NICHOLAS MURPHY  
OTHER ADDRESSEES FOR CHIEFS OF MISSION

NOT RELEASABLE TO FOREIGN NATIONALS

1. ISRAEL-LEBANON. THE ISRAELI ATTACKS ON PALESTINIAN POSITIONS IN SOUTH LEBANON, WHICH BEGAN AT APPROXIMATELY 0130 LOCAL TIME (1830 EST YESTERDAY) CONTINUED AS OF 0600 THIS MORNING. SIGNIFICANT ISRAELI FORCES, ESTIMATED BY OUR TEL AVIV DEFENSE ATTACHE TO INCLUDE ELEMENTS OF AT LEAST THREE BRIGADES, HAVE BEEN INVOLVED. THE OPERATION, CONDUCTED ON A BROAD FRONT FROM THE COAST TO MOUNT HERMON, INCLUDES AT LEAST 100 AIR STRIKES AT VARIOUS PALESTINIAN STRONGHOLDS, NAVAL BOMBARDMENT OF COASTAL AREAS, INTENSE ARTILLERY BARRAGES ON PALESTINIAN POSITIONS THROUGHOUT THE SOUTH, AND ARMOR AND INFANTRY ASSAULTS.

3. IDF GROUND FORCES HAVE THRUST INTO THE SOUTH IN AT LEAST FOUR DIRECTIONS--TOWARD KHIYAM AND THE ARQOUB, TAYYIBAH WEST OF METULLA, THROUGH BINT JBAYL AND ITS ENVIRONS, AND ALONG THE COASTAL PLAIN. PALESTINIAN SPOKESMAN IN BEIRUT HAVE ALSO CLAIMED THAT ISRAELI FORCES LANDED AMPHIBIOUSLY SOUTH OF TYRE, BUT WE CANNOT, AS YET, CONFIRM THIS. NAVAL UNITS HAVE CONCENTRATED THEIR SHELL-  
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ING IN TYRE AND THE REFUGEE CAMPS IN ITS VICINITY. ACCORDING TO IDF RADIO "AN APPRECIABLE NUMBER" OF THE INTENDED TARGETS WERE IN IDF HANDS BY 0630 LOCAL TIME, AND THERE WERE INDICATIONS THAT PALESTINIAN FORCES HAD LOST CONSIDERABLE GROUND.

3. OTHER INDICATIONS SUGGESTED THAT THE ISRAELIS WILL CONTINUE THEIR ADVANCES THROUGHOUT THE SOUTH TODAY. FOR EXAMPLE, ISRAELI ARMOR AND INFANTRY THIS MORNING CONTINUED A PUSH INTO THE ARQOUB; ISRAELI FORCES ACTIVE IN THE COASTAL AREA BROUGHT UP A PORTABLE BRIDGE AT 1000 LOCAL TIME, APPARENTLY FOR USE IN CROSSING THE STREAMS ALONG THE COAST; AND DEFENSE MINISTER WEIZMAN ASSERTED IN A MORNING PRESS CONFERENCE THAT THE IDF OPERATION WOULD CONTINUE UNTIL THE SOUTH IS "PURGED" OF FEDAYEEN.

4. ALTHOUGH INFORMATION IS STILL SKETCHY ON THE INTENSITY OF THE FIGHTING, THE PALESTINIANS SEEM TO BE PUTTING UP PERHAPS MORE RESISTANCE THAN THE IDF EXPECTED. JERUSALEM RADIO SAID THAT "HAND-TO-HAND" BATTLES HAD BEEN FOUGHT WITH THE PALESTINIANS. PUBLICLY, THE ISRAELIS ARE DESCRIBING THE OPERATION FOR DOMESTIC CON-

SUMPTION AS A MAJOR EFFORT TO "ERADICATE" THE PALESTINIANS IN SOUTH LEBANON. AT THE SAME TIME, HOWEVER, THEY HAVE SOUGHT FOR THE INTERNATIONAL AUDIENCE TO STRESS ITS LIMITED SCALE, AT LEAST IN GEOGRAPHIC TERMS. IDF SPOKESMEN HAVE MADE A POINT OF NOTING THAT "IDF FORCES DO NOT INTEND TO ACT IN GREAT DEPTH WITHIN SOUTH LEBANON." FOR THE SYRIAN AUDIENCE, THE IDF HAS CONCOMITANTLY STRESSED THE THEME THAT THE OPERATION IS NEITHER DIRECTED AT NOR INTENDED TO INVOLVE THE "PAN-ARAB DETERRENT FORCES."

5. IN BEIRUT, MEANWHILE, SYRIAN AND PALESTINIAN FORCES WORKED ON THE CITY'S DEFENSES. NEVERTHELESS, THE SYRIANS APPEAR VERY ANXIOUS TO AVOID A CLASH WITH THE ISRAELIS. EMBASSY DAMASCUS REPORTS THAT THE SYRIAN MEDIA COVERAGE OF  
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THE PALESTINIAN RAID ON ISRAEL HAS BEEN LIMITED AND MODERATE. MOREOVER, DAMASCUS RADIO THUS FAR THIS MORNING HAS ONLY BRIEFLY MENTIONED THE ISRAELI INCURSION IN A LARGELY STRAIGHTFORWARD MANNER. SYRIA IS UNPREPARED FOR WAR AND KNOWS THAT ITS COSTS WOULD BE STAGGERING. AS A

RESULT, IN THE EMBASSY'S VIEW SYRIA WILL LIVE WITH AN ISRAELI RAID OF TEMPORARY DURATION INTO SOUTH LEBANON.

6. THERE ARE, HOWEVER, OTHER ISRAELI REACTIONS THAT COULD FORCE A SYRIAN RESPONSE REGARDLESS OF THE CONSEQUENCES. THE VAST DISPARITY OF FORCES WOULD NOT PRECLUDE A SYRIAN INTERVENTION. AS EMBASSY DAMASCUS COMMENTS, SYRIA COULD DECIDE TO ENTER THE FIGHT, PARTICULARLY IF ITS LEADERS THOUGHT, AS APPARENTLY IS THE CASE, THAT THE GREAT POWERS WOULD INTERVENE TO LIMIT THE HOSTILITIES.  
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7. EGYPT. SADAT BECAME THE ONLY ARAB LEADER TO CRITICIZE THE PALESTINIAN RAID INSIDE ISRAEL LAST SATURDAY. IN AN INTERVIEW YESTERDAY HE SAID THE PALESTINIAN RAID WAS A "VERY SAD THING," NOTING THAT IT WAS PART OF A VICIOUS CIRCLE WHICH HE HAD TRIED TO BREAK BY HIS TRIP TO JERUSALEM. HE STATED THAT HE WOULD CONDEMN ANY ACTIONS AGAINST CIVILIANS. AT THE SAME TIME, HE ASKED THAT THE ISRAELIS NOT RETALIATE, SINCE SUCH A MOVE COULD ONLY MAKE THE ROAD TO PEACE MORE DIFFICULT. WE DOUBT THAT HIS STATEMENTS WILL APPEASE THE ISRAELIS, WHO HAVE FELT THAT THE EGYPTIANS SHOULD HAVE BEEN MORE OPEN IN THEIR CRITICISM OF THE RAID AND MORE SYMPATHETIC FOR THE ISRAELI LOSSES. (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE)

8. ISRAEL. THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT RECENTLY ANNOUNCED  
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THAT MEXICO WILL COVER ISRAEL'S TOTAL CRUDE OIL REQUIREMENTS IN CASE OF AN EMERGENCY. THE AGREEMENT SEEMS TO BE A DIRECT RESULT OF THE SHAH'S RECENT HINTS THAT IRAN MIGHT EMBARGO OIL EXPORTS TO ISRAEL IN AN EFFORT TO STIMULATE PROGRESS IN THE PEACE NEGOTIATIONS.

9. MEXICO NOW PROVIDES ISRAEL WITH 30,000 BARRELS OF OIL PER DAY AND HAS SUFFICIENT EXCESS CAPACITY TO MEET ISRAEL'S CURRENT DAILY CONSUMPTION OF 140,000 BARRELS. ISRAEL'S TANKER FLEET IS LARGE ENOUGH TO DELIVER THE PROJECTED INCREASE. (CONFIDENTIAL/NOFORN) VANCE

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